

THE DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF 1914 69

formuk the foil implications of which were scarcely realized in England at the time. When France, emboldened by her agreements, presented Morocco with a programme of reforms at the opening of 1905, Germany, whom Delcasse had most unwisely pmitted to consult, sharply asserted her treaty claims. The Kaiser's declaration at Tangier, Hands off Morocco!, inaugurated the first Morocco crisis and filled Lansdowne with alarm. He expected Germany to ask for a port on the Moorish coast, and on April 22, 1905, he offered to join France in strong opposition thereto. It was a false alarm, but on May 17 a historic conversation between Lansdowne and Paul Cambon occurred. "I observed/' reported Lansdowne, "that the moral of all these incidents seemed to me that our two Governments should continue to treat one another with the most absolute confidence, should keep one another fully informed of everything which came to their knowledge, and should* so far as possible, discuss in advance any contingencies by which they might in the course of events find themselves confronted/' When this communication was repeated in a letter, Cambon wrote to his chief that it suggested a general entente which would in effect amount to an alliance. Delcasse, who was now fighting for his political life, informed his colleagues at their meeting on June 6 that an alliance had been offered, and he reiterated the unfounded statement to the end of his life. France, however, was materially and morally unprepared for war; Delcasse, finding himself alone in the Cabinet, resigned, and Germany's invitation to a conference on Morocco was accepted on conditions. His career at the Quai d'Orsay began and ended with humiliation, yet the larger portion of his work endured. The reconciliation with

Italy and England had changed the face of Europe. In the grouping, of the Powers France had been one of two : henceforth she was one of four. The imposing Bismarckian edifice was crumbling away.

Germany naturally attempted to follow up her success, and as usual there was more of the iron hand than the velvet glove. Even Rouvier, the French Premier, who had evicted Delcasse and taken over the Foreign Office, came to the conclusion that France could not continue to retreat. On January 10, 1906, the eve of the Algecirras Conference, the French Ambassador asked the new Liberal Foreign Secretary whether England would help in the event of aggression. With his colleagues dispersed and before the electors had spoken,